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ABSTRACT

Definitions, standards, and activities of good day care are outlined in question and answer form in this evaluation booklet. Topics included are: services of the family day care home and the day care center; the availability and offerings of day care; types of children who need it; ways it can help; financial arrangements; and daily routines of each type of day care. Explanations are offered for the necessity of licensing and using social workers and for the special need concept of care. Final emphasis is on the community role, on what the effects are of inadequate day care, and on ways to improve the services or to initiate them. (LH)

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WHAT IS GOOD DAY CARE?

GOOD DAY CARE
IS A WELL-PLANNED
COMMUNITY PROGRAM

- it serves all children whose families cannot care for them at home throughout the day
- it takes the place of these children's own homes for part of the day
- it offers these children individual attention and affection
- it enriches these children's daily lives, helping each to realize his potential

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WHAT IS GOOD DAY CARE?

WHAT ARE DAY CARE SERVICES?

The Family Day Care Home:

(1) offers individual attention to ***the very young child.*** The infant, the toddler, the child under 3 is cared for by the day care mother in her own home. She is a friendly, sensible, warm person; her home has been inspected and has earned a State license.

(2) also offers ***the older child*** a home base in his own neighborhood after school.

The Day Care Center:

(1) offers group care for ***the young child,*** 3 to 5 years old. As one of a group, the child can play, work, and grow under the guidance of a trained teacher. A professional director runs the center, which is inspected and licensed.

(2) also offers group activity for ***the older child.*** Here his after-school hours and vacation days are guided by an interested, understanding group leader.

WHO HAS DAY CARE PROGRAMS?

Both public and voluntary agencies offer them. Sometimes a local, county, or

State public welfare agency sets up day care centers and supervises family homes. Elsewhere, these day care services are run by voluntary agencies—perhaps a church or a settlement house, perhaps a United Fund or Community Chest organization.

BUT—

Good day care is not a baby sitting arrangement, not a nursery school, not a playground activity.

This is why day care is different:

- **It is part of a well-rounded service program.**
- **It is run by trained, professional people.**
- **Its centers and homes are licensed.**
- **It offers counseling—dependable guidance for families that need help.**
- **It is care that reinforces the family's own care:**

  helping parents to shoulder their responsibilities

  giving children needed attention, affection, stability

  holding the family together.

Good day care, then, must be far more than a caretaking service. Its goal is to discover each child's special needs and to find ways to meet those needs.

To translate those words into reality, look at a few of the families that can be helped by day care.

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WHO NEEDS DAY CARE?

Robin does. Her mother is divorced and works as a clerk in a downtown store. At noon, Robin comes home to their small apartment from her split-session, third grade class. Then 8-year-old Robin is on her own until her mother arrives home at 6.

Giorgi does. When his father deserted the family, his mother found work as a domestic. His sister, who is 11, dropped out of school to care for 3-year-old Giorgi.

Alice does. Her father is a salesman who was seriously disabled in an automobile accident. Her mother has gone back to teaching. Alice, at 18 months, is in the care of a maid who is clean and efficient, but without warmth or humor or interest in children.

Esther does. She is 4 and mentally retarded. Her parents want her to live at home but are finding this more and more difficult; neighboring children and adults do not accept the little girl. Esther can develop and learn; she can gain much from a group—but only with the patient guidance of a skillful teacher.

Joseph does. Both his parents are college students who also work part-time. In the 6 months since his birth, Joseph's daily routine has consisted of being handed from neighbor to neighbor in the trailer park where his young parents live.

Paul does . . . and so do his brothers and sisters. Paul is the youngest, almost 2; the oldest in this family of nine children is 12. Their father is unemployed, their mother hospitalized. The family lives in two rooms in a slum tenement; they eat—and even sleep—in shifts.

Jerry and Sharon do. When their mother died last month, Grandma moved in to help. But active twins, aged 2, are too much for Grandma; the household is frantic, untidy, unhappy. The twins' father cannot afford a housekeeper, has trouble providing even the necessities of life. But he cannot face giving up his children to foster parents.

Day care is a service for ***any*** child who is threatened with neglect during any part of the day.

Day care is needed by many millions of children, from homes that are well-to-do and homes that are poverty-stricken . . . from families that are broken or disrupted or whole . . . in communities that are urban, suburban, or rural.

HOW CAN DAY CARE HELP?

This is how day care helps Mr. Henry, father of twins Jerry and Sharon. Widowed young Mr. Henry turns to his clergyman, who sends him to a Community Chest agency maintaining a day care program. The agency's social worker hears Mr. Henry's story, later meets the twins and their grandmother.

The social worker recommends Mrs. Angelo as a day care mother for the twins. Mrs. Angelo is an energetic woman in her late thirties; her own children are young teenagers. After several brief visits with Mrs. Angelo, the twins begin going to her home daily. Mr. Henry drops them off there at 8 each morning on his way to work; late every afternoon, he brings them back to their own home where Grandma welcomes them for a pleasant supper-and-bedtime session.

The agency's caseworker visits the day

care home frequently, helping Mrs. Angelo to settle the children into their new routine. The caseworker also talks with Mr. Henry and the twins' grandmother, to be sure they become comfortable with the day care plan. Later, when Sharon needs a tonsillectomy, the caseworker is available to smooth out the details of the child's hospital stay and recuperation period. And when Mr. Henry is temporarily laid off from his factory job, the caseworker quickly adjusts the day care fees.

HOW IS DAY CARE FINANCED?

Since fees for day care are based on a family's ability to pay, this money alone barely begins to support day care programs. Services by voluntary groups depend on Community Chest funds, endowments, and individual contributions, as well as purchase of service through public funds. Services by public welfare agencies may receive Federal, State, and some local funds. The Federal Government provides funds for day care to State public welfare agencies through the child welfare services program.

WHAT GOES ON AT A FAMILY DAY CARE HOME?

Just what you might expect to see in any pleasant home. The day care mother will probably be caring for one or two small children. There should be enough space for them to play safely and contentedly indoors and out. During the day they may make raisin cookies or mud pies . . . they will be napped and nourished . . . they will be loved and watched and disciplined.

For the older child, the day care mother is a sympathetic neighbor he sees

daily after school. He may stop in for a snack and chat with her before going off to baseball practice or a Scout meeting. He may spend the afternoon playing or studying at the day care home. He may bring his school friends there to visit.

WHAT GOES ON AT A DAY CARE CENTER?

The center may be in a large settlement house or housing project, in a small church or converted home. The child is one of a group of 10 to 15 young children who paint, paste, build, run, and climb—under the attention of a trained teacher. Playtime is learning for the child; it is balanced with mealtimes and rest periods, with times to be alone and times he can share with his teacher.

At a large center housing many groups, there will be a director who supervises the entire staff—teachers, group workers, cooks and kitchen helpers, maintenance people. There will also be social workers. Special consultants—such as a nurse, a dietitian, a pediatrician—will be available. At some centers, volunteer workers may help with children's activities, meals, and health programs.

The center's after-school program offers group activity for older children, guided by group workers who like and understand youngsters.

WHY IS LICENSING NECESSARY?

Unless the home or center is licensed by the State, the family has no assurance that the child will be well cared for. A State's licensing law should be based on reasonable standards of health, safety, and good care,

and on reasonable requirements for staff people.

WHY ARE SOCIAL WORKERS NECESSARY?

Trained professional caseworkers are needed:

First, to take stock of a family's situation. What problems do the parents face? Do they need help in maintaining the child's home, in fulfilling their responsibilities to the child? Can day care offer a solution? Is there a better one? Is the child ready for day care? Which kind of day care?

Second, to chart the child's progress in day care. Does his family need continued counseling? Have new problems cropped up? Does his day care mother or teacher need guidance in working with him? ***Are his special needs being met?***

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "THE CHILD'S SPECIAL NEEDS"?

There's a different answer, of course, for every child.

For motherless Jerry and Sharon, the need was for an experienced, but active, woman who could give them mothering and individual attention.

The need is somewhat different for the children of a migrant farm family, whose lives are a dismal round of poor meals, inadequate housing, interrupted schooling, utter neglect while both parents work in the fields. If they are lucky, the family may occasionally camp in a community with a well-planned day care program—a program designed to fill in the gaps in these children's

education, a program that can meet their urgent needs for care, and for recreation, nutrition, and health services.

And the answer is still different for the physically handicapped or mentally retarded child. For him, and for his family, good day care may mean specialized schooling, transportation, counseling for his parents, an opportunity for his harassed mother to give attention to her other children.

ONCE AGAIN: WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT DAY CARE?

As you can see, day care *is* different, vastly different. The center for young children may *look* like a nursery school. The after-school center for older children may *look* like any community playground. The family home may *look* like any private baby sitting agreement.

But behind the look, there are these unique extras in the day care picture:

its goal: to make certain that the child's total health, education, and welfare needs are being met.

its potent tool: that it is guided by people who care—trained social workers; professional teachers; capable, licensed day care mothers; and dedicated volunteers.

ARE DAY CARE PROGRAMS ALWAYS THIS EXTENSIVE?

No, unfortunately not. This pamphlet sketches the ideal; quite frankly, the

day care picture is not often this rosy.

Many communities—perhaps your own—must make compromises. The waiting lists for day care centers may be discouragingly long . . . trained teachers and licensed day care mothers may be scarce . . . caseworkers' loads may be unrealistically heavy . . . after-school care may be unheard-of. Saddest of all, in thousands of communities there simply are no planned day care programs run by public or voluntary agencies.

WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT PLANNED DAY CARE?

A family may be fortunate enough to find a private center run by a director who adheres to high standards. But they are often expensive, and they seldom are able to offer casework counseling.

The middle-income family may have only two choices: a private group care facility that is inadequate, even dangerous; or a personal arrangement with neighbors or strangers.

For the family without funds, the alternatives are particularly grim: entrusting the child to a neighbor's casual eye . . . leaving him to wander the streets alone . . . giving him up to foster care or for adoption.

WHAT IS THE DAY CARE PICTURE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Does your community offer . . .

☐ licensed day care centers?

☐ licensed family day care homes?

☐ counseling and casework services by public or voluntary agencies?

Does your community have . . .

☐ small children inadequately cared for by people who may be undependable, disinterested, even unkind?

☐ deprived, handicapped, or retarded children who need special care in their own community?

☐ lonely, neglected children—on either side of the railroad tracks?

☐ distraught families that could be strengthened and held together?

Does your community need . . .

☐ more day care facilities?

☐ better day care facilities?

☐ more trained workers?

☐ better licensing procedures?

☐ more collaboration among agencies?

HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE THE DAY CARE PICTURE?

These are the steps other communities have taken:

Form an exploratory committee . . . invite community leaders, interested citizens, clergymen, physicians, as well as representa-

tives of local parents' groups, women's groups, business, labor, United Fund, public welfare agencies.

Survey your community . . . discover the need for day care by finding out: (1) how many households with one parent? (2) how many working mothers? (3) with how many children under 5 years of age? (4) how many between 5 and 12 years of age? (5) how many need care away from their own homes for some part of the day?

Plan your immediate needs . . . where is a day care center needed most urgently? . . . how can you get it there? . . . how can you staff it? . . . what licensing standards must be met? . . . how can family homes be recruited and inspected? . . . how can counseling services be arranged? . . . where will the funds come from?

Mobilize the community . . . do your friends and neighbors understand day care? . . . how can you explain it to mothers, to employers, to community leaders? . . . how can you convince people to ***support and use*** good day care?

Keep your eyes on long-range goals . . . try to plan for your future needs by surveying new local industries, new housing projects . . . allocating funds for growth . . . seeking qualified personnel.

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